Distr.
GENERAL

IDB.23/16
20 October 2000

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Industrial Development Board

Twenty-third session
Vienna, 14-16 November 2000
Item 10 of the provisional agenda

ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

UNIDO follow-up to reports and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Report by the Joint Inspection Unit

Comments of the Joint Inspection Unit on the interim report of the UNIDO Secretariat concerning follow-up to JIU recommendations (IDB.23/12).

1. United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996 established the principle that "the impact of the Joint Inspection Unit [JIU] on the cost-effectiveness of activities within the United Nations system is a shared responsibility of the Member States, the Unit and the secretariats of the participating organizations".

2. Reflecting this concept of a shared responsibility for oversight, JIU prepared a document, entitled "Towards a more effective system of follow-up on reports of the Joint Inspection Unit", which was included as annex I to the JIU annual report of 1997 (A/52/34). This proposed follow-up system was submitted for consideration and action by the legislative bodies of participating organizations, and was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 54/16 of 29 October 1999. It appears that this proposal has not been submitted to the IDB for consideration.

3. The endorsed follow-up system is based on the fact that the value of a JIU report depends on effective follow-up, which requires (a) that the reports be given active and serious consideration by the legislative bodies of the participating organizations, and (b) that there be expeditious implementation of the approved/accepted recommendations, with full reporting on the implementation measures and analysis on the resulting impact. The system therefore proposes procedures for tracking and reporting on these actions. Also important for the proposed follow-up system, as indicated in annex I to document A/52/34, are the necessary conditions for effective follow-up on JIU reports, i.e., fulfilment of the roles of Member States, the Unit and the secretariats of the participating organizations in their shared responsibility for oversight.

4. As a complement to the proposed follow-up system on JIU reports, now endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, the JIU has prepared notes on the handling of JIU reports, which were addressed to the executive heads of the participating organizations. These notes, including the one for UNIDO, focused on a number of aspects related to follow-up on JIU reports. Rather than be considered independent of it, they were intended to facilitate the implementation of those elements of the proposed follow-up system falling within the competence of the secretariats of the participating organizations.

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V.00-58303 (E)

Distr.: 24 October 2000

5. The Unit recognizes the need for some clarifications and refinements to facilitate the endorsement by the IDB of the proposed follow-up system and its implementation by the parties concerned.

6. At its twenty-second session, the Industrial Development Board adopted decision IDB.22/Dec.7, para. (c) of which "Encouraged the UNIDO Secretariat to continue its dialogue with the Joint Inspection Unit with a view to developing a system of follow-up to Joint Inspection Unit recommendations in full consultation with all Member States and in due time, and to report thereon to the Industrial Development Board at its twenty-third session."

7. The Joint Inspection Unit was informed by the UNIDO Secretariat that it had submitted an interim report to the twenty-third session of the IDB in accordance with Board decision IDB.22/Dec.7.[1] As the JIU was not consulted on the contents of the report before its submission, the Unit feels it is appropriate to submit to the IDB its observations on this UNIDO Secretariat document.

8. The JIU fully supports the principle contained in paragraph 1 of the interim report that any procedures developed for the follow-up to JIU reports and their recommendations should be devised so that they may be implemented within available resources. It also supports the concept that the follow-up system should not become an extra burden to the IDB and/or the UNIDO Secretariat, and it is willing to undertake a detailed discussion with the UNIDO Secretariat on this aspect as part of the ongoing dialogue mandated by the IDB.

9. The JIU is aware that resource requirements depend on the approach to be developed. The JIU would like to have the opportunity to develop a sensible approach together with the UNIDO Secretariat.

10. In paragraph 3, it is stated that "In developing a follow-up scheme for UNIDO, constraints are encountered both at the level of the governing bodies and within the Secretariat, as summarized in the following paragraphs". Constraints, of course, depend on the interpretation of the proposed follow-up system contained in annex I to document A/52/34. The JIU is eager to discuss the interpretation of the proposed follow-up system as contained in annex I of A/52/34, as well as any constraints that the UNIDO Secretariat has encountered or may encounter in the implementation of the proposed follow-up system in the context of the expected dialogue between the two parties. This is and has always been the JIU purpose in promoting interaction and exchange of views with the UNIDO Secretariat. The JIU would have preferred that the UNIDO Secretariat had discussed its concerns about such alleged constraints with the Unit and only then brought those issues still unresolved before the IDB.

11. In paragraph 5, the Board has been called upon to take into account, among other things, "the feasibility of holding slightly longer sessions to accommodate the active and serious consideration of the reports". The JIU believes that it is premature to raise with the IDB this issue. In fact, the JIU is of the opinion that the IDB may not need additional time for consideration of its reports, provided that the IDB would consider only those JIU reports that (a) are relevant to UNIDO and (b) contain recommendations requiring action by the IDB.

12. In paragraph 6 of the interim report, the issue of resource constraints has been raised. The comments made in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 above apply.

13. In the same paragraph, the UNIDO Secretariat has touched upon a very important matter under discussion, namely, the relevance of the JIU reports to UNIDO. The JIU has repeatedly expressed to the UNIDO Secretariat its wish to discuss with the latter, within the context of the JIU Statute, the issue of deciding on the relevance of JIU reports before it is raised with the IDB.

14. On the issue of distribution of JIU reports, the JIU believes that an acceptable middle way would be that the JIU reports which are considered relevant to UNIDO and contain recommendations requiring action by the IDB are circulated to the IDB members only. A note by the Secretariat may be sent to all Permanent Missions informing them of the existence and availability of those JIU reports relevant to UNIDO, although here, again, this is an aspect that may be discussed first between the JIU and the UNIDO Secretariat.

15. The JIU would like to clarify that, according to the procedures envisaged in the JIU Statute, Article 11, para. 4 (b), "Translation of reports of concern to more than one organization shall be arranged by the Unit; reports of concern to only one organization shall be translated by that organization". Since most JIU reports are system-wide or cover more than one organization, the only burden the UNIDO Secretariat would have in translating JIU reports would be when only UNIDO is covered by a report.

16. In paragraph 8, the interim report refers again to the question of resource requirements, the relevance of JIU reports and their distribution. The comments made in paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 above apply.

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[1] See doc. IDB.23/12.

17. In paragraph 9, the UNIDO Secretariat asks for guidance by the IDB on a number of aspects "In consideration of the implications for the work of the Board and in terms of resources". The Unit believes that it is not proper to assume that there will definitely be implications for the work of the IDB in terms of resources. Therefore, it considers it premature to involve the IDB in a discussion based on this assumption before the questions raised in the preceding pertinent paragraphs have been discussed between the UNIDO Secretariat and the JIU as part of the mandated dialogue.

18. Moreover, some of the assumptions in the interim report appear to be somewhat misleading at this stage. In particular:

- Question (a): See JIU option in paragraph 14 above.

- Question (b): See JIU comment in paragraph 13 above. Moreover, the JIU does not believe it appropriate to present to the IDB the two options indicated. First, it has never been recommended that "all JIU reports" have to be distributed. Second, according to the JIU Statute, in particular Article 11(4)(c), the Director-General should not be in a position to decide by himself which JIU reports are sufficiently relevant to UNIDO.

- In the opinion of the JIU it is not necessary to seek guidance of the IDB on questions (c), (d) and (e) at this stage. The JIU recognizes, of course, that the text under (c), (d) and (e) were taken from A/52/34. Nevertheless, in the Unit's opinion, it is not proper to extract some specific and critically important elements from a comprehensive document and to present them to the IDB without having a prior dialogue between the UNIDO Secretariat and the JIU on the interpretation of the proposed follow-up system contained in annex I of A/52/34.

19. In view of the above, the JIU recommends that the IDB take note of both the interim report and JIU comments thereon and that it request the UNIDO Secretariat and the JIU to continue a constructive dialogue with a view to presenting a final concrete recommendation at its twenty-fourth session.